



Latvian Platform  
for Development  
Cooperation



## Statement of Baltic national NGDO platforms on the Amnesty International statement to Ukraine launched on the 4th of August

National level organisations are equal partners at the international scale.

August 24th, 2022

As the Baltic national level NGDO coalitions we raise our concerns about the lack of partnership with the national level civil society representatives in the development of the report on Ukrainian fighting tactics by the Amnesty International<sup>1</sup>. Amnesty International's recent published statement on Ukraine brings the debate of how the size, governance, and impact of the large international organizations - more specifically human rights organizations - may damage the cause of human rights, especially when the expertise and insights of national level partners are being dismissed.

Even though Amnesty International explains that there have been few days given to the government of Ukraine to comment the findings of report<sup>2</sup> - unsatisfactory amount of time for any government in the war situation, we strongly condemn the unequal treatment of the Amnesty International Ukraine. In comparison the report launched by Human Rights Watch<sup>3</sup> "Ukraine: Unlawful Russian Attacks in Kharkiv" reports the key stakeholder name and locations (excluding public interviews due to the security similar to the Amnesty international report), including the field interviews, data methods and info presented. In their report HRW states "Ukraine deploys military forces inside the city of Kharkiv, but in seven of the incidents of attacks, Human Rights Watch found no evident military objective – such as armed forces, weapons, or bases or other positions – in the vicinity of the attack. In one attack that damaged a hospital, there may have been a small Ukrainian military presence nearby, but the special protections provided to medical facilities under the laws of war meant this attack was still unlawful."

Professor *Gerald Steinberg* (founder and president of *NGO Monitor* and Professor Emeritus at *Bar Ilan University*) in his statement "False Accusations and Ideological Bias"<sup>4</sup> also raises a concern stating "*The contradictions were managed through complex and closed decision-making structures—NGOs that call on others to practice transparency do not practice it themselves. The*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/ukraine-ukrainian-fighting-tactics-endanger-civilians/> Checked 08.08.2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/statement-on-publication-of-press-release-on-ukrainian-fighting-tactics/> Checked 08.08.2022.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/16/ukraine-unlawful-russian-attacks-kharkiv?fbclid=IwAR3b\\_DUMHC1ZYBCSTYWSqE1xqKVIrtOX24J\\_YwLIbj1ZHuMqr1PeTom8UDY](https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/16/ukraine-unlawful-russian-attacks-kharkiv?fbclid=IwAR3b_DUMHC1ZYBCSTYWSqE1xqKVIrtOX24J_YwLIbj1ZHuMqr1PeTom8UDY)

<sup>4</sup> <https://quilllette.com/2022/08/11/false-accusations-and-ideological-bias/>, published 11 Aug 2022.



*process by which Amnesty chose to issue a report alleging Ukrainian human rights violations, the composition and editing of this document, and the objectives that they hoped to achieve, remain opaque.*” In correspondence to this statement, various leaders from the Amnesty International stepped down like f.e. co-founder of Amnesty International Sweden resigned in protest. Per Wästberg in his Twitter post on 10th of August noted<sup>5</sup>: “I have been a member for over 60 years. It is with a heavy heart that, due to Amnesty's statements regarding the war in Ukraine, I am ending a long and fruitful engagement.”

Oksana Pokalchuk, ex-head of Amnesty International Ukraine has publicly announced that the Ukrainian office has not been involved in the preparation and writing of the report, have not been heard about their arguments<sup>6</sup>.

Dismissing the insights and expertise of the local team and Ukrainian human rights workers is highly unethical and untrustful treatment of the national level colleagues and partners, and puts under the dispute the work of the international organizations who accept this stepping over the CSOs doing their honorable work at the national and local level. Disregard of the national context and CSOs that have proved their democratic and civil society activism for many years is unacceptable. Keeping in mind the crucial aspect that half of the interviews were taking in the occupied territories like Donbas, Bakhmut, Lysychansk where citizens faces a pressure of the occupied narrative, it would be crucial to outline all the methodology and comparison - fact checking aspects taking into account before making the final conclusions.

Ukrainian civil society has been leading the extensive humanitarian and development work and we all should honor their achievements, improve the broken international systems to be more effective and people oriented. Disregarding their contributions, especially at a critical time when we should all listen and trust Ukrainian voices when it comes to crimes against humanity in Ukraine, is not only an unfortunate incident, but a concerning precedent of erasing the voices of the victims and witnesses of human rights violations.

We express our concern that similar approach can be used also in the development cooperation processes in the reconstruction of Ukraine. We remind that the Busan Partnership Agreement for effective cooperation in support of international partnerships states ownership of countries themselves as a key principle<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1557329274054627330?t=wrn2Or1HHjg6RosEmmGkzQ&s=19>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/oksana.pokalchuk> Checked 08.08.2022.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm> Checked 08.08.2022.



We ask for **strong involvement** of the Ukrainian civil society in all processes of humanitarian aid and development support, empowering the long-term leadership and local ownership in line with very clear and transparent processes on any procedures, methodologies and processes addressing the Russia's war in Ukraine and Ukrainian situation analyzes, reconstruction plans and other policies. Strong and organized voice of all CSOs is more crucial than ever to continue to stand for democracy, freedom and human rights.

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation AKÜ

Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation LAPAS

Lithuanian NGDO Platform